

FACT SHEET: WINTER DRIVING

The leading cause of death during winter storms is transportation accidents. (FEMA Fact Sheet). Preparing your vehicle for the winter season and knowing how to react if stranded or lost on the road are the keys to safe winter driving.

Before you drive:

- Make sure your brakes, windshield wipers, defroster, heater and exhaust system are in top condition.
- Check your antifreeze and be ready for colder temperatures. Many windshield washer solvents are already treated to prevent icing.
- Check your tires. Make sure they are properly inflated and the tread is in good condition.
- Other suggested items to carry in your car are an ice scraper or commercial deicer, sand, kitty litter or burlap for traction if your wheels should become stuck and an old towel to clean your hands.
- It is also a good idea to take along water, food, warm blankets and extra clothing. A lengthy delay will make you glad you have them.
- Put an extra car key in you pocket. A number of motorists have locked themselves out of their cars when trying to get out of a stuck situation.
- If you have a cell phone or access to one, carry it with you. You can call 911 for emergencies or contact SHP statewide by calling *HP (*47). Both calls are toll free.

Driving Tips:

- ***Don't drive if you don't have to!*** If you must go somewhere, utilize public transportation whenever possible. If you must drive yourself, get an early start and allow plenty of time to reach your destination.
- Keep your gas tank full. It may be necessary to change routes or turn back during a bad storm or you may be caught in a traffic delay.
- Visibility is important keep your windshield and windows clear. Clear your windshield before you set out and keep it clear throughout your trip. It may be necessary to stop at a safe place to use a brush or scraper. Use the car defroster and a clean cloth to keep the windows free of fog.
- ***Slow down***, a highway speed of 55 miles an hour may be safe in dry weather but an invitation for trouble on snow and ice. Snow and ice make stopping distances much l o n g e r, so keep your seat belt buckled and leave more distance between your vehicle and the vehicle ahead. Remember to avoid sudden stops and quick direction changes.
- Bridges and overpasses accumulate ice first. Approach them with extreme caution and do not

apply your brakes while on the bridge.

- If you do begin to slide, take your foot off the gas and turn the steering wheel IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SLIDE. Do NOT apply the brakes, as that will cause further loss of control of the car.
- Be more observant. Visibility is often limited in winter by weather conditions. Slow down and watch for other vehicles that have flashing lights, visibility may be so restricted during a storm that it is difficult to see the slow moving equipment.
- When stalled, stay with your vehicle and try to conserve fuel while maintaining warmth. Be alert to any possible exhaust or monoxide problems. Open a window slightly for ventilation, run the motor for 15 minutes each hour and make sure the exhaust pipe is cleared. Set your directional lights to "flashing" and hang a cloth or distress flag from the radio antenna or window.

For other winter driving tips see www.dot.state.nc.us/news/winterdriving.html.